

Attachment 5

CONFIDENTIAL

EFFECTS OF HIGH ALTITUDE NUCLEAR EXPLOSIONS
(Contingency)

The United States nuclear test series, which is being conducted in its own security interest and that of the Free World, includes a limited number of high altitude tests. Knowledge of the effects of nuclear explosions at high altitude--phenomena which the Soviets studied in their series last fall--is critical to the development of defense against intercontinental missiles and to our ability to strike back after an attack.

Prior to the first US high altitude detonation, the President consulted and was advised by a group of United States scientists considered to be among the most experienced, competent and most directly concerned with high altitude phenomena, that the planned explosions would not produce lasting effects of concern and that there would be no hazard to health. Following the high altitude test of July 9, scientists associated with NASA, the AEC and the Department of Defense have been giving intensive study to the resulting phenomena of the test. Efforts were generally as anticipated although data available to date indicate a greater than anticipated increase in the intensity of radiation at higher altitudes in the region of the natural Van Allen belt. NASA will orbit a satellite before the end of the year to continue the study of the new radiation belt and to supplement the data already available from INJUN, ARIEL, TRAAC and TELSTAR satellites.

Data collected and results of these scientists studies are being made available to the public and world scientific community. All of this information is being given the most careful consideration in establishing the details of remaining tests in the high altitude group. Extreme care will be taken in the choice of altitude and yield of the high altitude detonations so there will be little enhancement of the two natural radiation belts and the artificial belt added by the July 9 test.

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CONTROL AND COVER SHEET FOR TOP SECRET DOCUMENT

DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION		REGISTRY
SOURCE		CIA CONTROL NO.
STATE		EX 185128
DOC. NO.	185128	DATE DOCUMENT RECEIVED
DOC. DATE	21 Sept. '62	22 Sept. '62
COPY NO.	12	LOGGED BY
NUMBER OF PAGES	1 (tot-12)	
NUMBER OF ATTACHMENTS	5	
<i>Copies, Desks to</i>		25X1A9A

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